

11/16/2009 This Week in Congress

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November 16, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." America gave a salute to our veterans as the country recognized Veterans Day this week. To pay tribute to a few Kansans who have impacted this national holiday, I penned an editorial [Kansans Supporting Veterans - Past, Present](#). Thank you to U.S. veterans for the dedication and service they have provided. To read the editorial, please [click here](#).

Talking Military Issues at Ft. Leavenworth

On Thursday, I hosted a meeting of my Military and Veterans Advisory Committee at the Lewis and Clark Center at Ft. Leavenworth. I formed this committee earlier this year, which is made up of Kansas leaders who have experience with military and veteran issues, to make sure that our state's military and veterans have a strong voice in Washington. The committee assists me with issues that affect service members, veterans, military retirees, Kansas military installations and communities.

During the meeting this week, we discussed the important role of the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) in training military leaders; the new VA outpatient clinic coming to Johnson County; the President's upcoming decision on troop levels and strategy in Afghanistan; meeting the mental health needs of returning service members; and protecting veterans' and service members' health care. We also praised Ross Perot's recent pledge of \$6.1 million to the CGSC Foundation to fund the "Col. Arthur D. Simons Center for the Study of Interagency Cooperation," and the "Gen. Hugh Shelton Chair in Ethics," at the CGSC at Ft. Leavenworth.

These meetings offer me the unique opportunity to become more knowledgeable about military and veterans issues. I appreciate Brig. Gen. Ed Cardon, Deputy Commanding General, for attending and for his comments. I wish Ft. Leavenworth's previous commander, Lt. Gen. William Caldwell IV, the best as he serves in his new command to lead the U.S. and NATO training mission in Afghanistan. [Click here to see photos from the meeting.](#) The following individuals are members of the committee:

- Roger Aeschliman, Topeka. Lieutenant Colonel, Kansas Army National Guard.
- Robert Arter, Lansing. Lieutenant General, U.S. Army (retired).
- Jim AuBuchon, Overland Park. Brigadier General, U.S. Army (retired).
- Rhonda Edens, Benton. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (retired).
- Mark Edwards, Junction City. Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army.
- Tom Fryer, Manhattan. Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Air Force (retired).
- Gene Heiman, Garden City. Korean War Veteran, U.S. Army, American Legion.
- Richard F. Keller, Leavenworth. Lieutenant General, U.S. Army (retired).
- Chaplain Orris E. Kelly, Manhattan. Major General, U.S. Army (retired).
- Gary LaGrange, Manhattan. Colonel, U.S. Army (retired).
- Richard B. Myers, Arlington, V.A. General, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, U.S. Air Force (retired).
- Robert R. Ulin, Lansing. Colonel, U.S. Army (retired).
- Dave Warnken, Hutchinson. Navy Seabees May 1966-Feb 1972, American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars.
- Dick Young, Manhattan. Command Sergeant Major, U.S. Army (retired).

Packing Supplies to Send to Iraqi and Afghan School Children

In honor of Veterans Day, I was at the National Guard Armory in Manhattan to help pack boxes with the organization, "Help us Learn...Give us Hope." This non-profit organization was created by retired U.S. Army Officer Colonel Gary LaGrange to collect and send school supplies - including books - to U.S. soldiers serving overseas. These soldiers then distribute the supplies to Iraqi and Afghan school children. These supplies are much needed in places such as Afghanistan, where illiteracy is approximately 70 percent among men and 90 percent among women. As other soldiers learned of the effort, the project grew. To date, over 260,000 pounds of supplies and 30,000 pounds of books have been sent to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Col. LaGrange indicated the demand for the supplies is substantial and, "clearly there is a huge unaddressed need and a tremendous opportunity for our country to help make a meaningful difference in winning the hearts and minds of citizens in those countries while helping their children toward a brighter future".

During the event, several groups of volunteers packed the supplies for boxes that will be sent overseas to soldiers and then distributed to school children. The volunteers included teachers and students from Clay Center Middle School and RSVP of the Flint Hills. Thanks to all who lent their time to assist children in Iraq and Afghanistan. Please visit the "Help us Learn...Give us Hope" Web site at <http://www.helpuslearngiveushope.org/> to learn how you can help. Click here to view photos of the event.

Attending Johnson County Community College Annual Event

On Saturday, I attended the Johnson County Community College (JCCC) Foundation's 23rd Annual scholarship benefit. JCCC hosts this annual event to raise funds to support students who are in need of financial assistance in pursuing their

dreams of a college education. This year, the JCCC Foundation will provide more than \$600,000 toward student assistance. Last year the benefit event raised \$300,000 in sponsorships to support student scholarships. The event has become an important source for scholarship funds at JCCC. Every Kansas student has an opportunity to a quality education, and I was glad to have the opportunity to participate, once again, in this annual event that benefits students. I am a member of the Community College Caucus and work to promote issues important to community colleges and their students.

Congratulations to Peggy Dunn, Leawood Mayor, and Terry Dunn, President/CEO of J.E. Dunn Construction Group, Inc., who were honored as the 2009 Johnson Countians of the Year. Thank you to Brad and Libby Bergman, this year's event chairs. Also thanks to Kristin McDaniel for the invitation.

Cheering on Smith Center and Meade High School Football Teams

I joined Smith Center and Meade High School fans in Smith Center on Friday night for the Class 2-1A quarterfinal football game between the two teams. I appreciated the opportunity to participate in the coin flip before the kick-off. Both teams have been successful this season having undefeated records. The Smith Center Redmen went into the game with a record of 10-0, while the Meade Buffalos entered at 11-0. It was a great game and Smith Center went away with the win in the end. The win was Smith Center's 78th straight victory and was head coach Roger Barta's 300th win. Congratulations to the players, coaches and fans of both teams for having such a great season.

Solicitations regarding the Social Security Notch Issue

I am aware that Kansans are receiving fundraising solicitations from interest groups that list my name asking for money to lobby Congress regarding the "Social Security notch" issue. As I have mentioned in the past, I want to remind Kansans that I am not part of these fundraising activities. While I appreciate efforts to collectively raise awareness in Congress on

specific issues, the most effective way to communicate your thoughts to me is by your personal letter, email message or phone call.

Many Americans born between 1917 and 1921, so-called "notch babies," have received a lower amount of Social Security benefits than those born both before and after them. This is the result of changes Congress made to Social Security in the 1970s to adjust Social Security benefits to the rate of inflation. Although intended to protect current retirees, these changes caused recipients to receive different benefit levels. I believe that it is only fair that Kansans who have paid Social Security taxes get a fair benefit when they retire. Therefore, I am a sponsor of H.R. 1067, the Notch Fairness Act, legislation that would provide notch babies with either a \$5,000 lump-sum settlement paid over a four year period or an improved formula for computing their retirement benefits.

I have sponsored this measure in previous Congressional legislative sessions. The Social Security notch should have been corrected a long time ago. This bill is currently under consideration in the House Ways and Means Committee and it is my hope that the Chairman will bring it up for consideration on the House floor.

Hays High School Musical

I attended the Hays High School fall musical "Seussical." My wife, Robba, was the accompanist. Congratulations to the students and directors for their hard work in putting together another successful and entertaining production. It was great to see more than 85 students participate in the performance as music education is so important for our students. Thanks to Elise Peterson, the music director of the show, and to Monte Smith, the drama director.

University of Kansas Football

On Saturday, I was in Lawrence to attend the Kansas football game against Nebraska. It was a great game and I was glad to have the opportunity to attend. Thank you to Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little for an enjoyable afternoon.

In the Office

Jay Allbaugh and Scott Schneider of Wichita and Colleen Jennison of Topeka were in with Cox Communications to discuss expansion of broadband services in Kansas. Dr. Lynn Kreider, President of Colby Community College, was in to tell me about the latest developments at CCC.

Several Kansans came by my Washington, D.C., office to receive a tour of the United States Capitol, including Carol Hulse of McPherson, Ashish and Mukul Ghosh-Hajra of Abilene and journalism students from Hays High School and Olathe Northwest High School. In for a tour from Hays were Dave, Terri, Alex and Ian Lenser and Frank and Josephine Musalek. Judy Hampel, Amy Maphet, Victoria Sanders and Alexis Mesmer of Pratt were also in for a tour.

Very truly yours,

Jerry

